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Defense Estimative Brief

China's ICBM Force Begins to Take Shape (U)

Summary

[REDACTED] Since initial deployments in the mid-1960s, China's strategic missile force has provided Beijing with primarily a regional strike capability. Through the early 1980s the ultimate shape of a future intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force remained unclear.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Although economic and strategic considerations have led to some missile program modifications, Beijing remains committed to deploying a small, but significant, number of ICBMs.

[REDACTED]

-- Given China's reliance on a strategy of minimal deterrence, the number of CSS-4s probably will not exceed some 20 launchers through the early 1990s.

[REDACTED] The CSS-4 will remain the only Chinese missile capable of threatening the continental United States.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The uncertainties about actual Chinese force levels which will continue to plague both the US and the USSR could take on greater prominence in future US-Soviet arms talks. Citing the large arsenals of the superpowers, Beijing will stress the irrelevance of its small strategic forces to any arms control agreements.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ATTACH 1

[REDACTED]

Discussion

1. [REDACTED] Background. Since initial deployments in the mid-1960s, China's strategic missile force has provided Beijing with primarily a regional strike capability. Even during this early period, however, development programs for longer-range systems were well underway. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Current Trends.

Economic and strategic considerations have resulted in some program modifications, most notably a stretching out of plans for SSBN construction. Nevertheless, Beijing remains committed to developing a diversified missile force, including a small, but significant ICBM capability.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4. [REDACTED] Future Forces. During the next ten years China's intermediate-range missile force will be marked by qualitative rather than quantitative growth. As new solid-propellant missiles enter the field older cryogenic systems will be phased out. In the late-1980s some numerical growth in the strategic missile force will occur as a small, but significant, number of ICBMs enter the inventory. These longer-range systems will occupy an increasing proportion of the missile force, as shown in the table below.

[REDACTED]

5. [REDACTED] We believe that China will continue to pursue a strategy of minimal deterrence relying on deployment of relatively small numbers of missiles with extensive use of mobility and CC&D to increase survivability.

[REDACTED]

6. [REDACTED] The CSS-4 will play a prominent role in Chinese strategy throughout the 1990s.



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